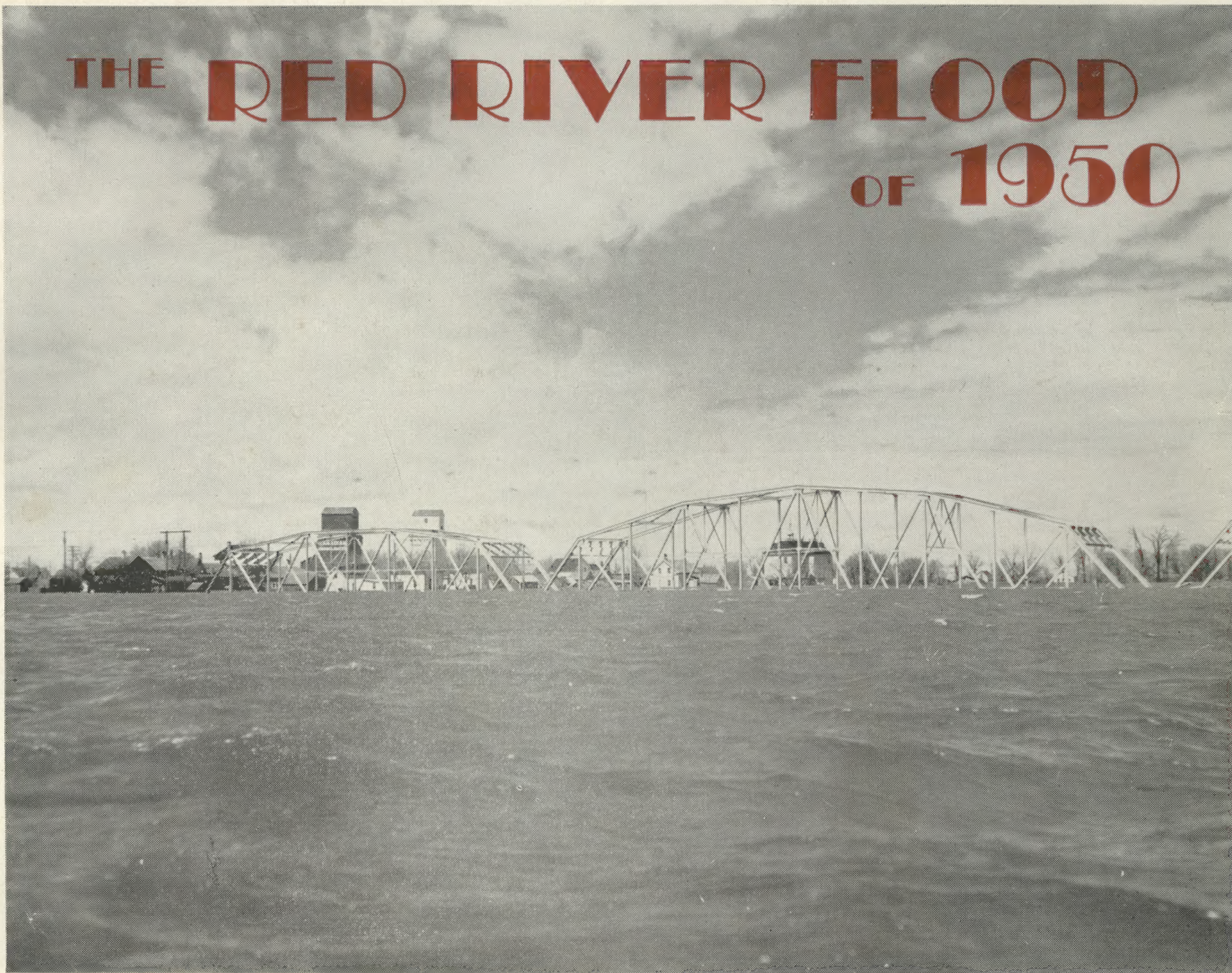


THE RED RIVER FLOOD OF 1950

A series of
photographs
taken along
the Red River
from Emerson
to Winnipeg
during the
Catastrophic
Flood of 1950

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this Flood Album
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The Bridge Spanning the Red at St. Jean Baptiste



Spring came late to the Red River Valley and Manitoba in 1950: the good rich earth had been soaked to saturation by heavy rains the fall before, and a record snowfall had blanketed the countryside during the winter.

Finally, when the sun came out, the secret fears harbored by residents of the Red River Valley were being affirmed. A flood was inevitable. Numerous flash floods, originating from the heavy snowfall, appeared everywhere in the Red River basin; little rivulets became rushing rivers; roadside ditches and culverts became rushing torrents, to feed an already swelling Red. Farmers released thousands of acres of inundated farm lands, all of which, and more, was to come back tenfold in the weeks to come.



On April 4 the Red River flooded in North Dakota, and while there was no general alarm, Red River farmers took a dim view of the situation, began making plans and seeking accomodation for livestock on higher ground.



Farmers living close to the river between Emerson and St. Jean were the first to evacuate. Guided by their experience of 1948, they knew that there was no other way. And even though they moved out before the flood, theirs was often a heartbreaking task. The spring thaw had softened roads, and flash floods often made conditions nigh impossible. It was often necessary to move cattle and chattels over a hundred miles to get to some friend only seven miles away. A gen-

eral feed shortage aggravated the situation of these River farmers.

One of the first mass evacuations to be witnessed was that of the Indian Reserve at Letellier, situated on a low spot along the Red. By jalopy, on foot and by team, these people fled to higher ground where a tent town was set up by the Dept. of Indian Affairs, leaving behind such houses as they had, to the whims of the Red.



On April 11 provincial engineers issued a statement saying that flood danger was "very great." At this time it was forecast that the water might rise as high or even a little higher than in 1948; no one dreamt of a record 7 ft. peak above the '48 level.

April 20, 1950: Red spills banks in Emerson area. When this picture was taken on the 20th, the town of Emerson was

still dry. Food was being stockpiled, furniture cleared out of homes, equipment was placed on higher grounds. People who had renovated homes since the '48 flood reluctantly took out their glistening hardwood floors for safekeeping in the attic.

On April 22 water swept into town, covering two thirds of it with at least two feet of water.



.... A week later the Emerson subway shown on the opposite page was impassable, even to boats.



April 24: The C.P.R. "Soo Line" rail link is threatened at Emerson. Crews dump thousands of yards of gravel along track to maintain last line into town. Water was now generally three feet deep, and seven feet deep in some sections

of town. Snow and cold added to the misery of flood-struck victims, who were now beginning a mass evacuation. Two thirds of the town was inundated. On April 30 the tracks gave way and train service could not be resumed until May 27.



Main Street, Emerson, photographed on April 30, when the flood was at its peak there — 46.5 feet above datum. Note

the subway in the background. Only a small part of Emerson remained above water level during the six week ordeal.



Naturally, people tried to do what they could to avert the flood. In an attempt to take all obstruction from the path of the slow moving Red, ice floes were blasted from Winnipeg

to St. Jean. This also averted possible damage to bridges.

L. to R.: Raymond Proulx, Eugene Landry and Luke Cyr, of St. Jean



In spite of a dozen or so Red Cross boats and other precautionary measures adopted by the flood conscious citizens, the extent of the flood caught St. Jean and district completely unawares. Evacuation was a hurried, grim affair. The

only building with a dry floor was the church, and on its steps boats were hastily built to rescue farmers and town people. Here, as in other flood stricken areas, warm praise was expressed for the help rendered by people of neighbouring districts.



Most of the men who remained at home to look after the town stayed at the St. Jean Hotel. Total population of the town during the flood was about 50, completely cut off from the outside world. On May 14, when these photos were taken, they had received no mail for 3 weeks. Telephone was cut

off, and intercourse with the outside world was dangerous due to low hanging power lines, submerged logs and fences.

One man got tangled up in a live Hydro line that was hanging close to the water, escaped with only burnt hands.



St. Jean Flood Squad - Part of a larger group that worked practically day and night until evacuation of St. Jean was completed, these men remained during the flood to "look after things." Picture taken in hotel lobby where they were

also fed. There is 8 inches of water on the floor.

Left to right: L. Rajotte, and E. Morin, standing. Eddie Lefond, A. Roy, Gerard St. Amant, Art Devigne, Oliver Roy, Roland Valcourt, Paul Emile Berard, Wilfred Morin, Eugene Landry.



Scenes like these were common in the Red River Valley all the way from Emerson to Winnipeg. Home in upper left be

longs to Senator Arthur Beaubien; right, Mr. Demairis and, bottom, A. Beaubien jr., reeve of Montcalm Municipality.



Farm Buildings – Letellier - St. Jean Area



The farm of Peter Goertzen, situated 11 miles N .W. of Dominion City. Mr. Goertzen was one of the few farmers who remained "at home" during the entire flood. There was 2½

feet of water in the barn, and Livestock was placed on platforms and in loft. Water was two inches below floor in house.



Mr. H. Gregoire, Mrs. Gregoire, Peter Goertzen and Mrs. Goertzen, who stuck out 6 weeks in the flood. When this picture was taken on May 14, the foursome had just returned from a shopping trip to Dominion City started the day before.

Visitors were the R.C.M.P. patrols which toured flooded area daily, and the Municipal Councillor, who came around at regular intervals.



Rescued from their flooded home in Morris by R.C.M.P. patrol boat, Mrs. Margaret Hildebrandt cradles her 14 month old baby Gladys. Beside her sits 4 year old daughter Joan.

Mrs. Hildebrandt like hundreds of others in Morris, lost her home and all her possessions in the flood ruin.



Worst hit in the 1950 flood was the town of Morris, as the above picture of Main Street clearly portrays. Mass evacuation began May 1. The Red Cross brought in dining cars, beds and boats to evacuate the town's population of 1200, and at least another 800 from the countryside, as the flood spread

into a 15 mile wide area. In the hectic days that followed, the Red Cross served more than 5000 meals and provided 1600 beds to flood victims. W. R. Moody, Morris was in charge of Red Cross operations.



Aerial View of Morris



Air photo showing the Morris Bridge



Dikes built around Morris hospital broke on May 5, and the hospital was abandoned. A skeleton work crew had their headquarters on the upper floor, which remained dry. Only

other dry floor in Morris was that of the Courthouse, where Red Cross headquarters were located.



A notable feature during the catastrophic flood was the way in which people from more fortunate districts came to the rescue. In the above photo a group of volunteers from Niverville hasten to the waters edge from where they will go but to

stranded farmers to bring out livestock and people. The barge was hastily constructed in the morning of May 10, and pitch was still dripping when it was unceremoniously dumped into the dirty flood waters and sped on its rescue mission.



The end of the line — farmers congregate on a high spot to await transport by such means as have been locally devised. The Red Cross had a number of barges and did tremendous work; but it could not be everywhere. Ruralites showed their

ingenuity and used many methods of transporting stubborn livestock. Daddy of them all may well be the plan whereby an inflated tractor tire was slipped around a cow and towed by motor boat.



Not branding time on the range, but tying calves for transport in a small 12 foot boat. Continual drizzling rains or snow made it a cold, wet, job.



This ingenious rig, consisting of a 12 foot boat and 2 large Hydro poles was capable of holding one cow and a calf, or two

medium size heifers, was towed by another boat and was in steady use. The lower picture shows the cargo all loaded to go.



A makeshift boat, makeshift paddles, and inexperienced-boatmen, but the volunteer helpers did wonders. The group pictured here (Niverville Flood Relief) is credited with bringing out some 300 head of cattle from the Ste. Agathe-St. Adol-

phe area. Slushing around all day in water up to three feet deep, pushing and pulling stubborn cattle that was afraid to leave their stalls, was no easy task.



Land ahoy! After being transported through gullies and deep water cattle is unloaded and driven to dry land, to be transported to stock yards or pastures miles from flood area.



Not all the livestock in the 30 mile "Red River Lake" could be rescued. This herd of 7, hungry and not milked, is standing on a dugout mound with the cold spray of the waves keeping

them wet and uncomfortable. In instances where the mounds washed away the cattle drowned. Note the depth of the water on the house and barn.



These horses found refuge in an old strawstack, so at least did not suffer from hunger. During the later stages of the flood low flying planes dropped feed to hungry animals.



An aerial view of Ste. Agathe, Man., one of the towns that was flooded only when the river neared its peak, approximately the 5th of May. Dry land is visible in the town, but

the surrounding countryside was completely inundated as far east as Niverville.



April 18: Drainage dikes collapsed at Rosenfeld, covering many square miles with two or more feet of water. The flood at Rosenfeld made the first flood headlines.



Pictured above is the little village of Rosenort, located about 6 miles N. W. of Morris. Here the flood caught the people completely unawares. On May 2nd, when they came home from helping around Morris, they found water creeping up on their

yards. A few days later, the water was higher, and the elements co-operated with a heavy, cold rain and strong wind. On May 5 they began to evacuate.



Rosenort Flood Crews: Upper left photo: J. Siemens, Peter Isaac, Abe Friesen, L. Toews, V. Goossen, Elmer Goossen,

John Harder. Lower right: A hearty meal is enjoyed in a C. P. R. Red Cross dining car after hard day's work.



Left: Flood headquarters at Rosenort. On May 6 water rose 8 inches in 6 hours. Right: Tractor with trailer meets truck on main highway, bringing more evacuees. By the time the truck

came to the station (McTavish) it was jammed full of people. 800 evacuated from this area, found refuge with friends and relatives in the Steinbach, Man. district.



Upper left: Temporary shelter for stock was found in grain annex. Upper right: Mr. Jac. L. Loewen, accredited with helping to plan the orderly and efficient evacuation of Rosenort

district. Lower left: A boat and a volunteer being transported to the scene of action. Lower right: Rosenort Egg Grading station.



Farm of J. U. Kornelsen, Rosenhoff. Here cattle rides in style on Red Cross barge.



Along the Soo Line: 1. A home in the Otterburne district;
 2. Roseau River cuts entrance to Dominion City from north;
 3. Earl Tolton, Otterburne farmer, travels along highway;

4. Otterburne curling rink; 5. The Donald Smith farm, Otterburne.



St. Pierre Village, May 6, 1950



Flood waters extended far up the tributaries of the Red. The Roseau River made history when it overflowed its banks at Gardenton (upper right) and Stuartburn (lower left).

Upper left: Farm of G. W. Siemens, Rosenort, and lower right, the village of McTavish.



The city of Winnipeg tried to stave off disaster by throwing up a series of dikes — 30 miles in all. Sandbags by the hundreds of thousands were flown in, and hundreds of rural men

and boys volunteered to carry sandbags, drive trucks or bulldozers. Not all dikes held, and when they gave way, water came up fast.



Men, Women, and Children at Work



St. Boniface



Riverview



St. Vital



Tache Ave., St. Boniface



St. Boniface Sanatorium



Kingston Crescent



Fort Rouge



Lyndale Dike



Words and pictures defy proper description of the damage and ruin left in the wake of the flood, particularly in Morris.

Upper left: A collapsed garage. Upper right: A heap of rubble is all that is left of Morris Creamery, once a sturdy cement block structure. Man on the left in the lower picture is Harry

Shewman, Mayor of Morris and MLA for Morris constituency, who has worked hard and loud for his flood stricken fellow-men. Lower left: Everything out in the sun — a typical after flood shot.



The stuccoed brick home of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Edinger, Morris, where a wind-driven hydro pole has smashed a large hole in the wall, and is now lodged in the kitchen and dining room.

